

[Mr. MacCurrie on New York]

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ORIGINAL MSS. OR FIELD NOTES (Check one)

PUB. Living Lore in New England

(Connecticut)

TITLE Connecticut Clockmaker (MacCurrie)

WRITER Francis Donovan

DATE 1/10/39 WDS. PP. 5

CHECKER DATE

SOURCES GIVEN (?) Interview

COMMENTS

W15087

"Living Lore" series.

Francis Donovan

Thomaston, Conn.

January 10, 1939 MR. MACCURRE ON NEW YORK

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Ousted from his accustomed place in the forum by other members of the fire department who this week take advantage of factory closings to enjoy the prerogatives of their membership, Mr. MacCurrie takes refuge behind his paper in a corner of the room. None of his cronies have returned to the circle and he affects a magnificent disdain of the opinions of these brash youngsters (ages 35 to 50) but the emanation from behind the newspaper of sundry snorts and ejaculations make it plain that he is closely following the conversation. Once or twice he attempts a caustic interjection, but being flatly ignored relapses into frustrated silence.

Mr. Coburn and Mr. Brennan are engaged in a discussion of economic matters.

Mr. Coburn: "I can't see any sense in taking all that gold and burying it in a hole. I mean out there in Kentucky. What the hell good is it doing anyone? What good is it any way? Gold don't mean anything any more. Will the world ever return to the gold standard? I doubt it. You're going to see some other kind of a money system some day. Gold won't be worth any more than any other metal. And this country will be left holding the bag, as usual.

Mr. BRENNAN: "Same as the war debts."

MR. COBURN: "Of course I don't believe in inflation, either. But all I say is, what good did it do to corner all that gold? What did this country ever get out of it? What good did it do to call in 2 all the gold? They were supposed to make a big profit out of it.

MR. BRENNAN: "Them war debts now. I see in the paper the other day, where England and France are fixing it up so's they can borrow money in this country to pay off their war debts to this country. Can you beat that for nerve? Leave it to them to figure out some way to put the screws to Uncle Samuel. I bet they do it, too. I bet this country will fall for it. This country was always a sucker for England and France. But this is the first time [al?] ever see them try out right robbery."

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MR. COBURN: "You know why they figured that one out, don't you? They're gonna make plenty on the exchange. They take the money from this country, change it into their money, and then pay it back to us. They make a profit on the difference. Get it? The bankers in this country will probably make it too. Those are the boys that benefitted the last time. The whole thing was arranged so they could make money."

MR. BRENNAN: "Yeah. Well, I ain't gonna worry much about it right now. I don't think many other people are worryin' about it, either. I was out New Year's eve havin' a good time and a log of other people were, too, I noticed. I took that excursion to New York and went down to Times Square. I got a kick out of it. I never see such a mob. We got pushed along, half the time our feet were off the ground. You had to go with the crowd. I got a new pair of rubbers that morning and like a fool I wore 'em. They were these half-rubbers, you know the kind. I wasn't there two minutes before somebody stepped on one in back and off it came. No use tryin' to stoop down, or even stop, in that mob. Worth your life. When we got out of the mob, I just kicked the other one off and let it go."

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MR. COBURN: Where'd you go?

MR. BRENNEN: "Oh, we just went in a couple of places for drinks. You know how they soak you on New Years' Eve. Went in Steuben's tavern and had a few, then we went into the Hofbrau, but there was a cover charge, four dollars a person, so we came out. We went down to see the sights more than anything else. You can get all the drinks you want right at home, at the same price. Why be a sucker just because its New Years' Eve?

MR. COBURNE. "Go in Dempsey's?"

Mr. BRENNAN: "No, we didn't even go by it."

MR. COBURN: "I bet it was mobbed. We went in the last time I was down to New York, and it was jammed then. It wasn't any holiday either. We saw Dempsey. He keeps runnin'

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between the bar and the dinin' room and he's a mighty busy man. He earns whatever they pay him. You know, he don't own that place. Probably gets a out on what they make. A couple of girls were in a booth the day we were there, and soon as they saw him they hollered 'Oo, Jack, how about an autograph?' He says, 'I'll be right back, girls,' but he didn't come back while we were there."

MR. BRENNAN: 'I don't blame him. Well, you can have New York. All right to go down there once in awhile for a trip, but I wouldn't live there if they gave it to me."

MR. COBURN: "Same here. Last time I was down there we went to see Joe Tyler, used to live here. He lives out on Long Island now. He gave us a big yarn about having an important appointment that afternoon. Said if things turned out right it would mean a big job for him."

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MR. BRENNAN: "Why is it that everyone who goes to live down there begins to shoot the old baloney?"

MR. COBURN: "I don't know. Must be something in the air. Anyway, Joe said for us to follow him, he had to go downtown, and held show us the shortest way through the city. We followed him for a while, and then we got tired of it and give him the horn. It made me laugh. He was creepin' along -- we just passed him out and came on home. What the hell, nobody has to show me the way around down there."

MR. BRENNAN: "Joe ever get his good job?"

MR. COBURN: "I don't know, I haven't seen him since."

MR. BRENNAN: "Well, a lot of guys from here have gone down there and landed good jobs. You can stick around here all your life, work in the clock shop, or the mill, and you'll

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die on the same job you went in on; but sometimes a fella moves down there, and he makes somethin' out of himself."

MR. COBURN: "I guess there's more opportunities in the city at that."

MR. BRENNAN: "They can have it, just the same."

MR. COBURN: "It works the other way, too. A fella comes here from out of town, and right away he gets himself a good job. If you're from town, you don't rate, somehow or other, they ain't got any confidence in you. I seen it happen time and again. They got some prize boneheads workin' down here, they got college degrees and some kind of technical trainin' and so they're supposed to know as much as God Almighty. But it's funny the place ain't makin' any money these days."

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MR. BRENNAN: "They made plenty when they took their foremen and superintendents off the benches."

MR. COBURN: "Them days are gone forever. I guess we should of gone to college."

MR. BRENNAN: "I guess we should of. We probably wouldn't know any more than we do now, but they'd think we did anyway."